

Dear Representatives,

I respectfully and urgently ask that you not pass HB 5711-5716 which would exempt Concentrated Animal Feeding operations from regulation and oversight and essentially take away a neighbor's ability to inform authorities of health or water problems without the risk of fines.

I am a full time farmer and have farmed with my husband for 16 years in Pittsford MI in Hillsdale County. I am also a registered nurse.

Since 2002 I have been documenting the health impacts of CAFOs on residents and neighbors of CAFOs and those people who live near fields where large volumes of liquid manure is applied.

The most visible and immediate impacts from CAFOs on residents comes from the air, the emissions, and the stench from the CAFOs, the barns and liquid manure pits or lagoons, and the huge silage piles. Equally harmful are the emissions from the large amounts of concentrated liquid manure (untreated feces and urine) being sprayed in the air or spread on fields in deep layers for days and weeks next to residences. This happens every month of the year but is worse in spring, summer and fall. Exposure to CAFO fumes are both acute, sudden bursts of emissions lasting for hours, or chronic, lasting days, with evenings and early mornings reported to be the worst times for stench and physical symptoms.

I have 7 pages of documentation of respiratory – breathing problems, asthma attacks, headaches, nausea, dizziness, throat closing, throat burning, inability to sleep, loss of appetite, confusion, anger, depression, reports of hopelessness, family gatherings disrupted by stench and flies, reports of dead cow parts on fields. I have observed many of these people in distress at their farms and homes.

Our most vulnerable rural citizens, the elderly, children and immune impaired, people with cancer, are exposed to these emissions with no oversight or concern demonstrated by our public agencies. These are farmers or family and neighbors of farmers. A rural community is not just livestock facilities. This was a stable rural community and all the people I've seen in distress have been here all their lives or lived here from 16 to 30 years. They understand farm smells. These are not odors but emissions. I have seen liquid manure being spread by several facilities simultaneously in the same area greatly increasing exposure to pathogens, hydrogen sulfide (a potent neurotoxin), ammonia, sulfur dioxide, and volatile organic compounds, (phenol, acetone etc.), bioaerosols (microorganisms). Last spring I observed 2 families with breathing difficulties, headaches, nausea, and sinus problems during a week of high winds when several CAFOs were spreading liquid manure simultaneously on fields and irrigating liquid manure in the air. It is impossible not to inhale droplets of liquid manure under these circumstances if you are outside or driving near a facility. It hangs in the air on dust for days.

The most acute symptoms come when liquid manure is spread or sprayed in the air when there is a high heat index, high temperatures and high humidity. Many people have to stay inside with windows closed and do not have air conditioning. This is extremely dangerous for the elderly and children. One farmer who does have air conditioning told me "you still feel bad" because it sucked in outside air and trapped the odor in the house.

This is what a farmer for 50 years north of Morenci said. "The smell from the hogs is devastating and you cannot get away from it, it just will move right in on you. You have to keep the windows closed when it's real bad and the weather is hot, we do not have air conditioning. I feel betrayed and I am frustrated and devastated that such a thing would happen to a farm here."

The hog CAFO ignored the *voluntary* GAAMPs and built the hog barns 700' from their residence.

Water is the hidden issue with the potential for huge public health consequences. I know of one facility that pumped the human waste from their 21 employees into the untreated waste lagoon with animal feces and urine and spread the mixed waste on fields until they were challenged by a local group who stumbled on this fact at the health department. There was no oversight. Once it became public the facility was forced to put in a septic system for its employees. I participated in a 2 year water monitoring project sampling water for *E.coli* and Dissolved Oxygen at tile outlets and streams immediately adjacent to CAFOs and areas of liquid manure applications. We took 430 water samples to a certified lab and 270 of those samples did not meet Michigan's water quality standards. Many samples showed extremely high *E.coli* counts. I have seen children playing in Lime Lake inlet; swimming at Medina Park, in Bean Creek in Morenci and Lake Hudson all downstream from DEQ documented discharges from CAFOs.

I refer you to a report by Dr. Joan Rose, Homer Nolin Chair in Water Research and Rachel Katonak from Michigan State University: "Risks to Human Health Associated with Water and Food Contaminated with Animal Wastes". August 2005. It concludes with this statement: "Animal manures contain pathogens that can and have been shown to spread disease to humans. Spread of animal manure on land without assessment and oversight presents a risk to public health."

I urge you to take the health of rural and downstream urban residents into consideration when evaluating these bills. Remember Walkerton, Ontario when the government gave up oversight on water facilities and cow manure contaminated the water and killed 7 people and injured over 2000 more.

Kathy Melmoth, RN

517-523-3307

11360 Union Rd.

Pittsford, MI 49271 2-21-06